

Tobacco Center of Regulatory Science on Youth and Young Adults

Tobacco Marketing and Alternative Tobacco Use among College Students (Project 2)

Loukas, Alexandra

P50 CA-180906-01

Abstract:

Use of non-cigarette alternative tobacco products is becoming increasingly prevalent in the United States, particularly among young adults who have the highest rates of use of these products. Limited evidence indicates that 18% of young adults have tried at least one of the following alternatives: snus, hookah, dissolvable tobacco, or an electronic nicotine delivery device (i.e., e-cigarette). Increasing use among young adults is alarming because tobacco addiction is solidified during this developmental period and because tobacco industry marketers have refocused their efforts on this population, their youngest legal targets (>18 years old). Yet, there is limited information on the diversity of tobacco products used by young adults, the changes and patterns of use across time, and the impact of tobacco marketing on young adults' use of non-cigarette. The proposed research will establish a rapid response surveillance system to monitor, and respond to, changes in tobacco marketing and trends in young adults' use of non-cigarette alternatives, including flavored products. Data will be collected semi-annually over a three year period and participants will include 4,056 Texas young adults from two subgroups: students enrolled in 4-year colleges and those enrolled in 2-year vocational programs. Vocational students tend to occupy lower socio-economic status (SES) categories than students enrolled in 4-year colleges, are more likely to be racial/ethnic minorities, and to have higher rates of tobacco use. Disparities in rates of tobacco use between the two groups may be due to differential tobacco marketing, which targets minority and lower SES individuals more heavily than other groups. However, there is no information on how the marketing environments differ across vocational and 4-year students. Our rapid response surveillance system will track changes in young adults' tobacco use, brand preferences, and tobacco use perceptions and beliefs over the three years. At the same time, we will conduct ongoing direct observation of tobacco print advertisements, brand websites, direct mail/email, and bar promotions. Data will characterize the tobacco marketing to which the two groups are exposed and in turn, examine the impact of marketing on changes in tobacco use over time. The Specific Aims of the research are to: 1) Describe the trajectories and transitions of tobacco use over time and determine the cognitive and affective factors associated with them; 2) Document and describe the tobacco marketing to which young adults are exposed; and 3) Determine the impact of marketing on young adults' tobacco use.